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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: GAILANIS DESCRIBE UNITY GOVERNMENT PLANS TO  
HOLBROOKE

Classified By: Ambassador William Wood for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Pir Gailani and son Hamed Gailani, the Upper House Deputy Speaker, told Ambassador Holbrooke they are organizing a unity movement of political leaders that could lead a post-May 22 caretaker government or stand for election in August. They identified two acceptable alternatives for Karzai: (1) he drop his bid for re-election in which case he could remain in office until the election, or (2) resign as president before May 21 so that he could not use the advantages of incumbency for his campaign. The Gailanis have explored offering enticements to Karzai to convince him to step aside, but believed the president was set on running for re-election.

Unity Movement  
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12. (C) During a February 14 meeting, Pir Gailani told Holbrooke he was engaging with most of the country's political elite to create a consensus-based unity movement ahead of this year's presidential election. No one party or tribe was capable of leading the country or solving the many challenges the country faced. Only a consensus process could keep the country united and position the government to address important issues. The clear constitutional expiration of the president's term on May 21 presented a challenge, Gailani contended.

13. (C) Gailani preferred Karzai not stand for re-election, in which case he would not object to Karzai remaining in office through the August 20 election (a date the Gailanis support). Alternatively, Karzai could resign before May 21 and allow a caretaker government headed by a team of political elites to govern until the inauguration. Gailani believed a presidential incumbent could easily manipulate Afghanistan's weak government institutions to his advantage.

14. (C) Based on conversations between the Gailani camp and Karzai, Gailani believes Karzai would reject these options and remain in office while running for re-election. The Gailanis had debated offering Karzai enticements -- including membership in the unity movement or immunity for his family from corruption prosecutions -- in order to convince him to step down, but predicted the president was set in his intentions.

15. (C) Those have not agreed on a leader. Gailani said the official formation of his unity movement is "imminent," although they were still hoping for the inclusion of one or two holdouts.

16. (U) Ambassador Holbrooke's party cleared this cable.  
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